

**Institute for Curriculum Services (ICS) Review on behalf of
the Community Relations Council of Richmond,
the United Jewish Federation of Tidewater, and
the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington
Five Ponds Press, *Our America 1865 to the Present*,
Teacher Edition, by Leslie Swenson
for middle grades
February 2018**

General Comments:

Our America 1865 to the Present offers middle grade social studies teachers an array of useful resources. Teachers will especially appreciate the “SOL Essential Knowledge,” “Supporting the Standard,” “Beyond the Standard,” and “Anticipate Learning” features. Well-curated lists of authoritative and bias-free websites are particularly helpful, though some links were not active at the time of review. Assignments and suggested activities support learning. The accompanying student text is clear and written at an appropriate grade level, if somewhat terse in places. This is the first time ICS has reviewed this text. The review addresses coverage of subject matter related to Jewish history and culture in the Teacher Edition and the accompanying student text. The corresponding “reproducibles” were not available at the time of review. ICS looks forward to reviewing these resources in the future and asks that corresponding edits be made for consistency between the text and reproducibles.

The text offers broad coverage of issues related to American Jewish history from 1865 to the present. Five Ponds Press is to be commended for its excellent treatment of the Holocaust, which is discussed with sensitivity and in age-appropriate ways. Coverage of other events and people in U.S. Jewish history and the history of anti-Semitism in the United States are glossed over at time. For example, the text fails to acknowledge the Jewish identities of important historical figures such as Emma Lazarus, Louis Brandeis, George Gershwin, Aaron Copland and Gloria Steinem. The 1915 lynching of Leo Frank goes unacknowledged. The Important contributions of Jewish Americans like Betty Friedan and Jonas Salk are not covered, and neither are the significant contributions of Jewish Virginians to the history and development of the state.

Overall, this is an excellent pedagogical tool that will serve teachers well. ICS appreciates the publisher’s dedication to meeting Virginia Standards of Learning in thoughtful and innovative ways. We look forward to working with Five Ponds Press on future editions of this text.

Review Legend:

~~Strikethrough~~ = Recommended deletion

Underline = Recommended addition

Comments = Explanation and rationale provided to support recommendations

Recommended Changes:

Chapter 4: The Newcomers, page 64, caption, **Add:** “I remember my father—my big, strong papa—crying like a baby when we sailed into New York harbor. It scared me to see him like this, but then he swept me up in his arms and twirled me around and his tears became laughter.”—Dora Galperin, an 8-year-old Jewish Russian immigrant”

Comments: Galperin should be acknowledged as Jewish. Doing so provides lets students understand her immigration, linking it to the events triggering Eastern European immigration as described in the text.

Chapter 4: The Newcomers, Huddled Masses, page 64, Four Reasons People Were Pushed or Pulled to America, caption, **Change:** “a ~~crowded~~ Jewish burial ground cemetery in Central Europe”

Comments: It is customary to use the term “cemetery” when discussing Jewish burial. It is not clear why the adjective “crowded” is used here except perhaps to underscore that violence against Jews pushed them to leave Europe. This is an unnecessary addition.

Chapter 4: The Newcomers, Classroom Library, page 64, paragraph 2, line 1-3, **Add:** “*The Memory Coat*, by Elvira Woodruff, is a picture book story of a Jewish Russian boy and his family who come to America.”

Comments: According to the publisher, the main character in *The Memory Coat* is Jewish, which provides important context to the events which triggered his immigration to the U.S. from Eastern Europe (see Woodruff, Elvira. *The Memory Coat*. New York: Scholastic Publishing, 1999. <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/books/the-memory-coat-by-elvira-woodruff/>. Accessed February 11, 2018). The text acknowledges the Jewish identity of the main character of another Classroom Library recommendation (*When Jessie Came Across the Sea*), so it should also be acknowledged in this instance.

Chapter 4: The Newcomers, From Fear to Religious Freedom, page 65, paragraph 1, line 7-12, **Change:** “~~Jewish people~~ Jews in Eastern Europe were especially terrorized. To have the chance to live without fear of being beaten or killed ~~because of your faith~~ seemed like a dream come true.”

Comments: Jew or Jews are the appropriate term for the collective ethnic and religious group. Texts sometimes use “Jewish people” out of the belief that the word Jew is somehow offensive. Jews use the noun to refer to themselves and are proud to do so.

Pogroms included destruction of property, assault, rape, and murder. The proposed change offers a better description of the threat facing Jews.

In the Russian Empire and Europe more generally, Jews were seen as a separate ethnic group or “nation” distinct and apart from non-Jews who were considered “true” Russians, etc. As such, Jews were targeted for multiple reasons, including religious, cultural, and political reasons. The recommended change offers a more nuanced description.

Chapter 4: The Newcomers, Our Most Famous Immigrant, page 65, line 18-19, **Add:** “From the poem, ‘The New Colossus,’ by Emma Lazarus, a Jewish American poet.”

Comment: Texts should highlight the diverse identities of American historical figures and the contributions of Jewish Americans. Lazarus was inspired to write “The New Colossus” in part by the pogroms in Eastern Europe and her pioneering work in aiding Eastern European Jewish immigrants

Chapter 4: The Newcomers, No Foreigners Need Apply, Go Away!, page 68, line 2-5, **Change:** “In the 1850s, ~~native Protestant Americans~~American-born white Protestants tried to delay Irish Catholics’ ability to become citizens with voting rights.”

Comments: The phrase “native” in this context is misleading and may cause students to wrongly assume that Protestant Native Americans tried to delay suffrage for Irish Catholics. “White” should be added as Protestant African Americans were not involved in these efforts.

Chapter 4: The Newcomers, No Foreigners Need Apply, More Votes Than There Are People? The Rise of The “Political Machine,” page 69, paragraph 1, line 1-2, **Change:** “The Irish, Italians, Jews, Central Europeans, and Germans represented millions of votes to politicians seeking election.”

Comments: Jews should be mentioned since they made up a large portion of immigrants to the United States at the time and represented an important voting bloc.

Chapter 4: The Newcomers, Captains of Industry, John D. Rockefeller: Oil, page 91, line 12-14, **Change:** “Rockefeller was a ~~‘control freak’~~controlling and got involved in every part of the refining process. from making barrels to manufacturing pipe to shipping the oil.

Comments: The term “control freak” is too informal and carries with it the implication that Rockefeller’s personality was a product of pathology.

Chapter 6: From Farm to Factory, The Rise of the Labor Union, Roots of the Holocaust, page 96, paragraph 2, line 1-2, **Add:** “Samuel Gompers, who had arrived in America as a 13-year-old Dutch Jewish immigrant, helped build such an organization.”

Comments: Texts should highlight the diverse identities of American historical figures and the contributions of Jewish Americans. Just as the contributions of African and Asian Americans are recognized, Gompers’ Jewish identity should also be acknowledged.

Chapter 6: From Farm to Factory, A Time for Change, page 97, paragraph 1, line 1-4, **Add:** “The sweatshops of New York’s garment industry were terrible places to work, but on the evening of March 25, 1911, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory became a fiery tomb for 146 mostly Jewish and Italian immigrant women.”

Comments: It is important to note that this event disproportionately affected Jewish and Italian immigrant communities. Virginia Standards (USII 4b) encourage discussion of discrimination against specific immigrant communities.

Chapter 9: Roaring 20s, Somber 30s, The Jazz Age, The Sounds of Africa Meet America, page 132, title, **Change:** “A New Sound for a New America~~The Sounds of Africa Meet America~~”

Comments: The term “Sounds of Africa” jazz and suggests that the African American contribution of jazz is foreign. The suggested edit eliminates any exoticization of African Americans while still recognizing the transformational contribution of jazz music.

Chapter 9: Roaring 20s, Somber 30s, SOL Essential Knowledge, page 135, paragraph 3, line 1-3, **Add:** “Aaron Copland and George Gershwin, Jewish composers who wrote uniquely American music.”

Comments: Descriptions should highlight the diverse identities of American historical figures. Gershwin and Copland’s Jewish identities should be noted in the student text as well.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, Additional Resources, page 147, paragraph 4, line 1-3, **Change:** “Find propaganda posters, videos, and primary sources about FDR on PBS’s American Experience site:

www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/photo-gallery/fdr/.”

Comments: This link is no longer accessible. A new link should be found or the selection should be omitted.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, Classroom Library, page 147, paragraph 4, line 1-3, **Add:** “The Devil’s Arithmetic, by Jane Yolen, is the story of a present-day 12-year-old Jewish girl transported back in time to Poland before the German invasion.”

Comments: Since *The Devil’s Arithmetic* specifically focuses on the Holocaust, the Jewish identity of the main character is vital to the plot and themes of Yolen’s work. The text should indicate that the protagonist is Jewish (see <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/323559/the-devils-arithmetic-by-jane-yolen/>).

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, Classroom Library, page 147, paragraph 5, line 1-4, **Change:** “No Pretty Pictures: A Child of War, by Anita Lobel, is an autobiographical account of her ~~childhood~~ life as a Jewish child in a concentration camp in Nazi-occupied Poland, until her arrival in America as a teenager.”

Comments: The text should indicate that the protagonist is Jewish.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, Classroom Library, page 147, paragraph 10, line 1-5, **Change:** “Making Bombs for Hitler, by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch, is a novel about what children in Nazi ~~work~~ forced labor camps faced. The gripping story is of a Ukrainian girl assigned to make bombs used to further the Nazi reign and her courage as she tries to sabotage the plans.”

Comments: Forced labor camp is a more accurate term to describe the camps in which people were imprisoned and forced to work for the Nazis or face death.

The text should indicate that the protagonist is Ukrainian as the work explores the way in which non-Jews were targeted. (see <https://www.scholastic.com/kids/book/making-bombs-for-hitler-by-marsha-forchuk-skrypuch/>)

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, Looking For A Leader, page 149, paragraph 2, line 8-13, **Change:** “In 1932 and 1933, his plan worked. After years of turmoil in Germany, the National Socialist Party—the Nazi Party for short—won a ~~majority~~ plurality of seats in the government. Adolf Hitler soon became chancellor (the German equivalent of a president) and some of the darkest days in all of human history lay ahead.”

Comments: The Nazi Party won a plurality, not a majority in the 1932 Federal Election, and after the Reichstag Fire orchestrated by the Nazis, they were able to gain a majority and put Hitler in the position of chancellor.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, Villains and Heroes, Beyond the Standard: Flags, page 151, paragraph 7, line 1-9, **Change:** ~~“As an extension, challenge students to apply what they know about the countries forming the Axis Powers and create ONE Axis Powers flag. Encourage them to think of the ideals shared by the Axis Powers, physical characteristics of the countries, and other information they learned. They should choose colors and symbols to represent the Axis Powers. Then have students create a second flag to represent the Allied Powers.”~~

Comments: In light of the destruction caused by the Axis powers and the Holocaust, teachers and students may find this activity offensive. An exercise making a chart and Venn diagram would accomplish similar pedagogical goals in more appropriate ways.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, A Date Which Will Live in Infamy, Anticipate Learning, page 155, paragraph 6, line 1-4, **Change:** “Build background knowledge by sharing the famous speech: www.archives.gov/education/lessons/day-of-infamy. Scroll to the bottom to play an excerpt from the radio address.”

Comments: The link is no longer accessible. A new link should be found or the selection should be omitted.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, A Date Which Will Live in Infamy, Supporting the Standard: Pearl Harbor, page 155, paragraph 2, line 1-11, **Change:** “The National Museum of the U.S. Navy has wonderful resources about Pearl Harbor. Begin at www.history.navy.mil/content/history/museums/nmusn.html. Select ‘Education’ along the top bar. Select ‘Additional Resources’ from the drop-down menu. Scroll to the bottom. Select the lesson titled “A Day That Lives in Infamy.” Of particular interest is the activity “This is Not a Drill.” For a direct link, visit:

www.history.navy.mil/content/history/museums/nmusn/education/additional-activities/the-date-that-lives-in-infamy-pearl-harbor-high-school-/this-is-not-a-drill.html.”

Comments: The links are not accessible. New links should be found or the selections should be omitted.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Supporting the Standard: Four Freedoms, page 155, paragraph 1, line 1-15, **Change:** “Roosevelt shared his vision for a stronger, better future based on four freedoms referenced in his 1941 State of the Union address. Reread these freedoms in the speech excerpt found on page 155. Have each student fold a piece of paper in half and then in half again. When opened, the paper should have four equal squares. Label the top of each square with one of the four freedoms. Ask students to decide what each means to them and

add a representative drawing in each square. When finished, project Norman Rockwell's interpretations of the four freedoms found at the National Archives' Powers of Persuasion exhibit of poster art from WWII. Have students analyze the paintings to determine how Rockwell represented each freedom. Tell students these paintings went on a tour to raise money for the war effort. Discuss if each freedom has been accomplished around the world today as Roosevelt envisioned.

www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/four_freedoms/four_freedoms.html.”

Comments: The link is not accessible. A new link should be found or the selection should be omitted.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Beyond the Standard: Radio, page 155, paragraph 2, line 1-15, **Change:** “Edward R. Murrow, a journalist who was transferred with colleagues to Europe, also used the radio to communicate during this time. Together, these men became known as the “Murrow Boys.” They reported from the front lines with courage, bringing the reality of the war to America. Murrow captured the trust of the nation with his direct, descriptive point of view. Play a few Murrow recordings from

http://history.journalism.ku.edu/1940/multimedia/audio/Murrow_broadcasts/wwii_radio.shtml.

Comments: The link is not accessible. A new link should be found or the selection should be omitted.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, On the Home Front, Read and Discuss, page 156, paragraph 11, line 1, **Change:** “How did the treatment of Japanese Americans change the way we think about citizenship ~~Do you think these would ever happen again in America?~~ Explain.”

Comments: The question as posed is insensitive and may scare students, especially those who belong to marginalized communities. The recommended change serves a similar pedagogic function.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, On The Home Front, Beyond the Standard: Propaganda, page 157, paragraph 1, line 1-21, **Change:** “In WWII propaganda distributed by the government played a large role in the way people behaved. In America, the government used different forms of persuasion. Sometimes it would appeal to strong patriotism and other times it would use fear tactics to gain American support for the war effort. Visit

www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/powers_of_persuasion_intro.html.

Project and discuss propaganda posters for the following groups:

Women: ‘It’s Woman’s War Too!’

Americans conserving and rationing resources: ‘Use It Up, Wear It Out’

African Americans: ‘United We Win’

Discuss the message and the strategy for delivering the message used on each poster. Explore the rest of the exhibit to view both positive and negative campaigns. Then ask students which tactic (appealing to patriotism or instilling fear) they think is the most effective and why. As a conclusion, pose the question, ‘is propaganda, even with good intentions, ethical?’”

Comments: Link is not accessible. A new link should be found or the section should be omitted.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, The Holocaust, page 158, caption 1, line 1-3,

Change: “The Holocaust is an example of prejudice, discrimination, and genocide ~~taken to the extreme.~~”

Comments: Genocide is by nature extreme.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, The Holocaust, Read and Discuss, page 158, paragraph 2, line 1-2, **Change:** “What is the ~~difference~~ connection between anti-Semitism and Aryan supremacy?”

Comments: Nazi anti-Semitism and Aryan supremacy were highly connected, so it is important for students to establish the linkage.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, The Holocaust, Read and Discuss Cont'd, page 158, paragraph 2, line 1-2, **Change:** “~~Do you think something like the Holocaust could happen in today's society? Why or why not?~~”

Comments: It is insensitive to ask if the Holocaust could happen again and the discussion may scare Jewish students or students from other communities targeted during the Holocaust.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, The Holocaust, The Start Of The Final Solution, page 158, paragraph 1, line 2-3, **Change:** “The Nazis were also anti-Semites, so they began to persecute ~~people of the Jewish faith~~ Jews.”

Comments: All Jews, regardless of whether they were religious, were targeted, as much of their discrimination by the Nazis was on ethnic grounds.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, The Holocaust, The Start of the Final Solution, page 158, paragraph 2, line 2-6, **Change:** “But most loved their country and were disappointed that the civilized world would let this continue ~~and could not believe that the civilized world would let this continue. They believed that somehow, everything would return to how it had once been. They were wrong.~~”

Comments: German Jews were acutely aware of their history of persecution and many were not surprised.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, The Holocaust, Kindertransport, page 158, paragraph 1, line 1-2, **Change:** “Many outside Germany ~~The free world were~~ was horrified by the news of Kristallnacht, but little was done.”

Comments: This sentence lacks significant detail. While some offered help to German Jews, by and large much of the outside world was indifferent. The U.S. government obstructed Jewish refugee immigration until the end of the war, when it was almost too late.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, The Holocaust, Supporting the Standard: Liberation, page 159, paragraph 1, line 1-7, **Change:** “Have students work with a partner to define liberate. Explain that it means ‘to set free.’ Visit the United States Holocaust Memorial

Museum site, titled 'LIBERATION,' on their 'Learning Site for Students.'
www.ushmm.org/outreach/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007724. Scroll to find the liberation map. Enlarge and project it.”

Comments: Link is not accessible. A new link should be found or the section should be omitted.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, The Holocaust, The Concentration Camps, page 159, paragraph 2, line 2-3, **Change:** “A small town in Poland called Auschwitz became the site of a new forced labor ~~work~~ camp.”

Comments: “Work camp” has the implication that the work was voluntary and compensated. In reality, inmates were forced to work or faced the threat of death, therefore the term “forced labor” is more accurate.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, The Holocaust, The Concentration Camps, page 159, paragraph 2, line 3-7 and footnote, **Change:** “A chilling headline in a Nazi newspaper warned ‘...the time is near when a machine will go into motion which is going to prepare a grave for the world’s criminal—Judah*.’ *A name Hitler used to refer to Jews. Another name for the Jewish people.”

Comments: The term “Judah” is typically not used to describe Jews. It was primarily used by Nazis and other anti-Semites.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, The Holocaust, The Legacy of Anne Frank, page 159, paragraph 1, line 17-20, **Change:** “Anne died in a concentration camp ~~death camp~~, but her spirit lives on in the pages of her wonderful diary.”

Comments: Anne Frank died in Bergen-Belsen, a concentration camp, which is different from a death camp.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, The Holocaust, With An End In Sight, page 159, paragraph 1, line 4-7, **Change:** “~~Their gruesome gas chambers had killed~~ The Nazis murdered six million Jews, a half million Gypsies Roma ~~(a wandering people with no homeland~~ a travelling people in Europe and Asia), and 250,000 disabled men and women.”

Comments: The text refers to estimates of total numbers of murdered. Not all victims were killed in gas chambers so the reference to “gas chambers’ should be removed in this context.

Murder is a more accurate term to describe the intentional killing of Jews and other during the Holocaust.

The word Gypsy has negative connotation. Roma and Sinti are the preferred terms for the ethnic groups historically referred to as Gypsies (see United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Sinti and Roma ("Gypsies")." Collections, Bibliographies. <https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/sinti-and-roma-gypsies>. Accessed on February 11, 2018).

The description “wandering” has the implication of traveling aimlessly, which is an inappropriate description for an itinerant people. The idea that the Roma and Sinti had no homeland reinforces negative stereotypes of Roma vagrancy and is factually

inaccurate. Most commonly, different Roma groups travelled within their particular countries (France, Germany, U.K., U.S.A. etc.).

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, The Holocaust, page 159, caption 1, line 1-4,

Change: “A sign was erected at the entrance to Auschwitz: ‘Arbeit macht frei.’ It means ‘Work makes one free.’ What it really meant was those who could not work would die death awaited most who entered.”

Comments: It is more accurate and specific to say that those who could not work would die.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, The Holocaust, Organizing the Standard: Nazi Tactics, page 159, paragraph 3, line 6-8, **Change:** “Conclude by discussing how the Holocaust is an example of prejudice, discrimination, and genocide ~~taken to the extreme.~~”

Comments: Genocide is by nature extreme.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, The Holocaust, Supporting the Standard: Liberation, page 159, paragraph 7, line 1-3, **Change:** “Who liberated ~~Dauchau~~ Dachau, the camp set up by the Nazis as the model for other camps that were used to ~~kill~~ murder countless Jews and other people?”

Comments: Please correct the typographical error in the name of the Dachau concentration camp.

Murder is a more appropriate term in this context.

Chapter 10: The Worst World War, The Holocaust, Supporting the Standard: Liberation, Teacher note, page 159, paragraph 1, line 1-7, **Change:** “There are many first-person accounts by survivors and liberators. It is recommended that you carefully screen any accounts before sharing with students. ~~One valuable teacher resource is www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/lesson_plans/index.asp. Scroll down and select the lesson titled ‘Liberation and Survival.’~~”

Comments: The link is not accessible. A new link should be found or the selection should be omitted. A working link with survivor testimonies may be found here:

<https://sfi.usc.edu/full-length-testimonies>.